

INTRODUCTION TO THE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLANNING PROCESS IN MARYLAND



The Maryland Health Improvement Plan (HIP) is a product of Healthy Maryland Project 2010, Maryland's response to the nationwide Healthy People initiative.

What is a Health Improvement Plan?

A health improvement plan is a document that provides a framework and consensus-based recommendations for improving the health of the residents of a state or local community. In a time when new health information is presented and refuted daily and budgets revolve around the latest health threat, a health improvement plan provides insight into health solutions for the long term. It presents a road map for how to achieve health for all. A positive health status provides the foundation for success in health and business. It is a foundation for a healthy economy.

What is Healthy People?

Healthy People is the name of the objective-setting process for health promotion for the nation. It is further described in the Healthy People Overview included in the full HIP report.

What is Healthy Maryland Project 2010?

Maryland's response to the national Healthy People 2010 initiative was launched in July of 1998 to unite stakeholders from all segments of the community in a collaborative effort to protect and improve the health of all Maryland residents.

How was the Maryland Health Improvement Plan developed?

A wide range of government and non-government representatives participated in the development of Maryland's Health Improvement Plan. The Healthy Maryland Project 2010 steering committee is made up of over 100 representatives from state and local health departments, academia, medicine and the non-profit, faith, and business communities. The steering committee approved the overall concept of the planned report. The planning committee was instrumental in overseeing the year-long development process. In the Fall of 1999, State health program directors and local health department personnel were given guidance for development of each module by the Office of Health Policy at the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Input from outside government was required for each module through focus groups or an existing process. Draft modules were compiled in the Spring of 2000, and a working draft was distributed for public comment in August 2000. At each stage, care was taken to include community input for the purpose of ensuring a consensus-based plan.

What is contained in the Maryland Health Improvement Plan?

The Maryland Health Improvement Plan sets Maryland-specific objectives for improving the health of Marylanders. In addition, the HIP presents action steps for how to achieve these objectives. The focus areas presented in the document, however, do not make a complete list of the health

problems facing Maryland's citizens. The focus areas included in the document were chosen by consulting four sources: the 28 national focus areas, the outcome priorities of the 1999 Healthy Maryland Project 2010 Summit, the priorities presented in the 24 local health departments' annual plans for FY2001, and a survey of the Healthy Maryland Project 2010 Steering Committee. The 17 focus areas make up the "Statewide Focus Areas" section of the document. At least one topic of concern is addressed in each focus area.

Each local jurisdiction has chosen one or more focus areas to highlight in the HIP. These do not necessarily represent the highest priority health issue for that jurisdiction, but are areas of concern. The modules from Maryland's 24 local jurisdictions make up the "Local Focus Areas" section of the document. The appendices contain the names of all the contributors.

How will the Maryland Health Improvement Plan be used?

Everyone is encouraged to participate in improving the health of Maryland's residents. Achieving the objectives outlined in the HIP will require the combined efforts of organizations, families and individuals. The list below covers some of the opportunities for using the Maryland Health Improvement Plan:

- **Health-related organizations** are encouraged to use this document in developing organizational plans, developing priorities, and identifying opportunities for collaboration.
- **Faith communities, community-based organizations, and businesses** can use this document to guide health promotion activities, special events, and publications.
- **Schools and academic institutions** can use this document to assist in health promotion curricula and activities for students.
- **State and local government** representatives can use this document as a reference, and to identify areas for collaboration.
- **Local communities** can use this document to assist them in their health objective-setting processes.
- **Families and individuals** can use this document to set personal goals for health improvement.

What's next?

Project 2010 will continue to promote Maryland's public health. Major action areas, in non-priority order, include:

- Improving the statewide public health infrastructure;
- Garnering support of the Maryland business and faith communities;
- Narrowing the gap between public health theory and public health practice;
- Addressing gender, age, cultural, racial, and geographic health disparities;
- Updating Healthy Maryland and other related health status indicators;
- Improving health status measurement capability;
- Improving the quality of local level health data;
- Promoting collaboration among all health promotion advocates; and
- Broadening participation from all Maryland communities in Project 2010.